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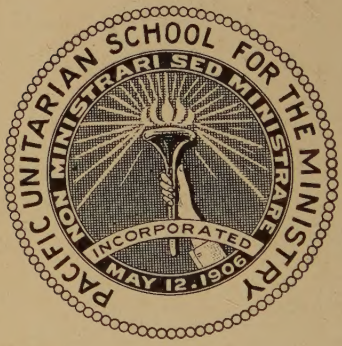

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A MANUAL

FOR THE

CONFIRMATION CLASS

A MANUAL

FOR THE

CONFIRMATION CLASS

BY

WILLIAM IRVIN LAWRANCE, TH.D.

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INTRODUCTION.

RELIGIOUS education, when well organized, provides for the regular promotion of learners from grade to grade and from department to department in the church school. The natural culmination of this process is the graduation of the older pupils into church membership. It is in the hope of assisting in the preparation of these candidates to be received into the church that this manual has been prepared.

The relation between the minister and the young people of his church is so sacredly personal that any suggestion from another as to his methods of dealing with them in matters relating to their religious experience seems an intrusion. The author, having known the joy and the anxiety of such relationships, offers these suggestions with mingled hesitation and confidence. He recalls how eagerly in the past he has sought and welcomed the aid of others, and has found help in their methods even where he has not followed them. He hopes that this manual will at least stimulate others to develop better methods than are here suggested.

The personal nature of the relationship here considered makes it all the more evident that it is the minister, fully as much as the young people, who should be prepared. His first step may well be to make a brief study of his local church's history, with, perhaps, a sermon or Alliance address on the place of that church—historical, actual and possible—in the community. This will serve not only to renew his own knowledge and devotion but to rouse a church-consciousness on the part of the people that will then be felt in his confirmation class. He will do well also to secure from the American Unitarian Association the free leaflet entitled "A Course of Reading for Applicants for the Unitarian Fellowship," and follow the suggestions about reading there made. Some, at least, of the books referred to can be borrowed from the Lending Library at the headquarters building, and the very valuable tracts mentioned are to be had for the asking. The latter might well be secured in such quantities as will supply one of each kind for every member of the class. Copies of the Unitarian Year Book, the Alliance Manual, and of the Annual Report of the officers of the American Unitarian Association should be provided for the class to examine. The Bulletins of the Department of Religious Education and of the Department of Community Service, and catalogues of The

Beacon Press and of the Department of Religious Education, will serve to illustrate the varied activities of our central missionary body. The more of such reading the young people can be led to do, the more earnestly and intelligently will they enter upon their church relationships and obligations.

Several of our ministers have offered valued suggestions as to ways of conducting a confirmation class. Among these the following may be found helpful:

A course of lessons or conferences on James Freeman Clarke's familiar statement of "Our Faith."

A course on the now widely adopted covenant, originally phrased by Charles Gordon Ames: In the love of truth, and in the spirit of Jesus Christ, we join for the worship of God and the service of man.

Still another suggestion is that the lessons be presented in three groups: 1. Unitarian History, from the Arian controversy to the present time. 2. Unitarian Thought and Doctrine. 3. Unitarian Organization.

Studies in religion have been taken up by some ministers, dealing first with the great faiths and culminating in our Unitarian movement.

One of our ministers treats, first, The Fall of Man, The Vicarious Atonement, and The Professions of Faith. Over against these he then considers The Ascent of Man, The Development of Personality, and Spiritual Mastery of Life.

Another gives a series of talks on The Old Testament, The New Testament, Jesus, The Christian Church, The Unitarian Church, What is Religion? What does it mean to be Good? Why do we support the Institution that cultivates Religion and Ethics?

Still another, in emphasizing our doctrinal position, lays great stress on the church actual rather than "invisible," emphasizes the identity of faith with obedience to God's law, and points out that "the old theologies gave man a downhill theory, while ours gives an uphill idea," bringing all to the climax of belief in personal immortality.

A minister whose confirmation classes are remembered by his pupils with peculiar gratitude took his successive classes through a course which included serious studies on these topics: The Thought of God, of Man, of the Bible, of Jesus, of the Church, of Heaven and Hell, of Christianity, of the Church Universal. He also expected every

member to memorize certain selections from poems, illustrative of the topics treated.

Those who wish to conduct the study class through a longer period than is contemplated in the seven lessons here offered, may well augment the course by following one or more of the plans thus given. The Notes that follow may also provide material for such prolonged study, since the work there indicated would in each case require more than a single period—perhaps would require several class sessions—to cover the ground. The material offered is purposely made ample, so that the class leader may choose what seems most promising, or assign different items to the various members of the class.

It is earnestly recommended that when the candidates have been prepared for church membership they be received in some public manner. Two impressive services have been prepared for this purpose, and appear on pages 8 and 13 of Volume I of "A Handbook for Ministers," issued by the American Unitarian Association.

While this manual has been prepared with the minister chiefly in mind, the author is inclined to think that the members of the class might also profitably have it in their hands. In the study of these great themes, the group

should work together for a common purpose. It is not finalities of dogma but a growing faith that we seek to establish. If this manual shall contribute toward the help of any earnest minister as he engages in one of the most solemn of his privileges, or if it helps any young man or woman to a serviceable faith, it will have accomplished its purpose.

First Lesson.

WHAT IS RELIGION?

1. Religion is a natural experience.

Scholars say that man is "inescapably religious," that our situation in a universe so much vaster than we are naturally inspires wonder, awe and reverence. It seems that no tribe or nation has ever been found that did not have some form of religion. In its cruder forms, religion has to do with man's relations with the forces of nature, and with whatever being or beings are supposed to be back of nature, that is, to God or gods. As men become more civilized they think more of their relations with one another. In this way religion came, in time, to include morals, or matters of conduct, including even our feelings toward others. Finally, men saw that our reverence for God and our conduct toward and thoughts about others depend upon what we are in our own hearts. So, the three laws of religion, as it has progressed, seem to be, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thy-

self, and Thou shalt keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.

In studying about religion, then, we do not go outside our own interests. We are born into a religious atmosphere, and are part of a great religious movement. The religious life is our normal life, the only one in which we can be really happy or successful. In making such a study, we seek to understand religion, and to learn how to live the religious life intelligently and helpfully. In other words, we seek to know how to reach our own highest development and to do in the best way our part in the world.

2. Religion, like every other great idea or impulse, brings people together into groups. There are certain great religions in the world, and in most of these there are smaller groups, usually called sects or denominations.

The "great" religions that are usually named together are such as Brahminism, Buddhism, Parsism, Confucianism, Judaism, Mohammedanism and Christianity. In Christianity there are three main divisions, the Greek Catholic, the Roman Catholic, and the Protestant. Among Protestants there

are many sects, the principal ones of which are known to us. Our own body, the Unitarian, is one of these.

Each great religion or sect may be considered apart from any others, its history, size, organization, beliefs and practices being tabulated and studied. A better way to study these movements, however, is to start with the fundamental impulse that we call religion, to trace the growth of that impulse as it affects and is affected by climate, political history, vital human interests and the growth of knowledge, and to see each religious body as the expression and embodiment of some phase or outcropping of a common movement.

3. Thus, religions have come out of religion. These have their history, not only as they are separately developed but as they come from, lead to and affect each other.

Every known religious body may be—probably is—the child of older movements and the parent of those that may follow. No church can be fully understood without reference to its vital connection with others. Attempts to inaugurate religious movements without relation to existing or historical movements, by adopting beliefs and bringing

together passages from the world's scriptures, regardless of their origin, have usually resulted in failure. Religions cannot be made; they must grow.

Our own history as Unitarians is thus inseparably connected with that of others. Our ancestry runs thus: Hebrew, Early Christian, Greek, Roman, Protestant, Unitarian. The Hebrews established the idea of One God. Jesus and his disciples made it clear that this One God has a parental love for all mankind, and demands righteousness of all. The Greeks set the followers of Jesus to philosophizing about their beliefs and feelings, and so developed theology. The Romans organized those followers into a compact body, keeping them compact by forbidding them to do any more independent thinking, and subjecting them in all matters to the priesthood. The Protestants liberated the church from this tyranny, made each one feel a sense of personal responsibility, and then, not fully trusting their own fundamental principle, set up an infallible Bible instead of the absolute Church, and once more tried to stop people from thinking out and improving their religious faith. Liberalism, or Unitarianism, restored full liberty, making each mind, as well as each heart and life, responsible to God alone.

Second Lesson.

OUR POINT OF VIEW.

1. While there are wide differences between religious bodies, they have much in common.

Most Christians regard Sunday as their holy day; the Seventh Day Baptists and the Seventh Day Adventists observe Saturday; the Hebrews regard Saturday as their Sabbath. Baptists immerse their candidates in water; Methodists do the same if desired, but usually place a few drops of water on the head. Most other Christian churches use only this latter method, while the Friends, or Quakers, use no form of baptism at all. Equal differences are seen in the services of worship, from the Catholic ritual to Quaker simplicity, and in doctrine, from those who regard the Bible as the infallibly inspired word of God and Jesus as God himself, to those who think of the Bible as a book of Hebrew and Early Christian writings, and Jesus as a pure, Godlike man.

Despite all these differences, the various religions have much in common. Even their rites and ceremonies, as well as their doctrines, have often a close connection in history and in meaning. Of especial importance is the fact that good people, saintly in character, full of good works, are found in them all. People of all creeds generally agree that the justification of forms and doctrines is found in their ability to promote purified and ennobled character. There is a tendency in all churches to come constantly nearer to each other. The really great-hearted members of the various churches recognize the kinship of aspiring hearts and of good lives, wherever found, and are observed to fellowship with each other most freely.

2. Of more importance than ceremony and belief is the personal attitude, or point of view.

In the old story, two knights fought a bloody battle over the composition of a shield, one declaring it was silver, the other, gold. In fact, it was silver on one side and gold on the other. Each might have said,—perhaps all people who dispute might say,—"If you will stand where I do, you will see what I see." So there is not much use in

debating points of difference. The way to come to any kind of understanding is to "get together." By working together and worshipping together people do really *get* together, and so understand each other.

This does not mean that the differences between churches are unimportant. In fact, they may be very important. Our beliefs may be rational, or they may be irrational; they may comfort us in sorrow and sustain us in our moral crises, or they may depress and weaken us. So our customs of worship may stimulate to high purposes and earnest endeavor after the holiest life, or they may become of so exaggerated importance in our view that, having scrupulously observed them, we may feel that our whole duty is done, so that it matters little how we live in other particulars. Each one should, therefore, know what his own church believes and what are its practices, and should understand the reasons for them. He should strive to gain all the good they are able to provide. But he should also be reverent toward the beliefs and practices of other earnest people, even when they are not such as he can accept.

3. Much depends, then, upon our having, or getting, the right point of view. We

may not, at first, be able to determine just what that is, in detail, but it ought at least to have certain characteristics.

(1) Our point of view should be broad. We cannot think of God, the Creator of all, as partial, wilfully revealing truth to some and withholding it from others; or as arbitrarily selecting some for salvation and condemning others to eternal torment; or as making the way to "salvation" depend on a single episode of past history, or the acceptance of a dogma whose meaning we cannot grasp, or on the exact observance of some ceremony. "Salvation" cannot mean merely getting into heaven, or even "my own best good," but the upbuilding of society,—what Jesus called the bringing in of the Kingdom of God.

(2) Our point of view should be rational. We shall realize that we each have only one mind, so that whether we study history, or science, or art, or religion, there is only one way in which knowledge can come to us. We cannot believe any doctrine to be true which is contrary to reason, nor believe that God would be justified in doing what would be shameful if we did the same. We shall expect to find things in religion that we can-

not verify for ourselves, just as we do in history and in science. In all these we will "keep the open mind," seek knowledge, and, while gladly learning from those who have studied deeply and seem, therefore, to be competent to teach, we will still maintain an independent judgment.

(3) Our point of view should be earnest, even reverent. We should be earnest and reverent in all our studies; supremely so when we study religion. Here we think about and try to know God. We are dealing with the profoundest of human experiences. We are handling man's greatest concerns. We must have a clear head, but we must also have generous impulses and a friendly heart. Most of all, we must pursue our quest with the supreme purpose of becoming better persons ourselves and of making this world a better world than it is.

The Unitarian faith has these qualities. It is admirably fitted to lead us to truth, which is man's greatest need, and to inspire us to work for the promotion of the kingdom of God, which is our highest duty. Our church has, therefore, a rightful claim upon our loyalty.

Third Lesson.

WHAT WE SEE FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW.

1. The main characteristic of the Unitarian church is its point of view. In any study of Unitarianism it is more important to ask "why" than to ask "what" in regard to our beliefs, our practices and our history.

Because we try to be at once broad and rational, we do not expect all people to express their convictions in the same words, either in religion or in other matters. Minds being different, conclusions will differ. It is better that people should be free to express these differences than that they should all claim to believe alike when in reality they do not. That is why we have no authoritative creeds, or common expressions of doctrine. We have, as individuals, very clear and earnestly-held beliefs. Every person, that is, has a creed of his own. But we ask no

one to accept another person's creed, save as it commends itself to reason.

Because we see how large a matter we are dealing with, and know that in all matters knowledge grows from age to age, we do not try to keep one set of doctrines intact. We do not pride ourselves on believing just what our Unitarian forefathers did. To do so would be to say that no new knowledge has come, that the human mind has not advanced. Because we try to be both rational and earnest, we feel that right beliefs and practices are those which, at once, accord with reason and tend to promote the good life. It is important to have right views. It is more important to live a right life, pure and helpful. Therefore the reason why we study theology and try to arrive at just views is that in this way we may better understand God and his truth, and may learn what our part is in promoting the good life. And the reason we maintain churches and observe religious forms is that by such means we are stimulated to be better persons and to do more for the world's good.

Notwithstanding our refusal to try to compel uniformity in belief and practices—perhaps because of our taking that course—there is substantial agreement among us regarding the most important matters. "The

things most commonly believed among us" are frequently set forth, not with any attempt at authority or finality, but as an aid to mutual understanding and a stimulation to further study. The differences as well as the agreements among these statements of faith serve to emphasize the supreme importance of our point of view and the minor importance of those theological conclusions we have for the moment reached. As illustrations of these principles we may take up two matters that are much in dispute among the churches, beliefs about the Bible and about Jesus.

2. What we see in the Bible.

The Bible is a large book made up of sixty-six different writings, thirty-nine of which were written before Jesus was born and constitute the Old Testament, the other twenty-seven having been written after Jesus died and constituting the New Testament. The authors of these writings are for the most part unknown. The Old Testament contains myths, legends, histories, laws, poems, prophecies (sermons), proverbs and other kinds of writing, relating to Hebrew life and thought. The New Testament contains four versions of the life and teachings of Jesus

(three of them very much alike, the fourth quite different), the story of what happened to the followers of Jesus after his death, a group of letters written to churches and individuals, and one sample of a strange kind of prophecy, the so-called Book of Revelation.

We find in the Bible some of the greatest utterances ever penned. No writings that did not contain lofty passages could have survived through so many thousands of years, or could have been regarded as "sacred" by such multitudes of people. The antiquity and history of the Bible, its great variety of topics and style, and the fact that it has been set apart as "Scripture" and as such valued and loved above every other book, should lead us to read it with pleasure and study parts of it with care. We give very great weight to its high teachings. We may well rank it as the greatest among books, carrying, therefore, a certain authority, especially where it deals with morals and faith. But we cannot accept, even in the Bible, statements that our reason declares to be untrue, or teachings about conduct that our consciences reject as wrong.

We shall of course find errors in such a varied collection of writings. The various books bear the impress and set forth the

views of the times in which they were written. Knowing this, we cannot hold, as some do, that the Bible is "infallible," or that it is "the only rule" of life. Expecting errors, we are not disturbed by finding them. But it is not the errors, it is the many helpful passages in the Bible for which we look. Its words help us to understand some of the mysteries of life, shame us for our sins, and inspire us to nobler living. It is for such help that we go to the Bible, not to find texts that will settle matters of belief.

3. What we see in Jesus.

There are two questions we should ask ourselves with regard to Jesus. One is, What do we think about him? The other is, How do we feel toward him? The first of these is the question the theologians have for the most part studied and discussed together. But the second question is the more important.

a. Who was Jesus? He was a Jew, living in Palestine, who was so influential that the whole Christian church grew out of his teaching, even our way of reckoning time dating back to him. So highly did people come to think of him that after his death they began to say that he had been miraculously

born, just as followers of Buddha said of their great leader. These birth stories in the Gospels—like those in the Buddhist writings—are very beautiful. They give a touch of art, of romance, of poetry, to the life-story of Jesus, and are fittingly recalled at the Christmas season. They cannot, however, be regarded as historical. We are sure that Jesus grew up under wise and earnest religious guidance; that he not only believed but was profoundly moved by the religious teaching of his people; that he was of such winning personality and moral power that others gladly gave themselves to his leading; that he led those who came to know his message to see life and faith and duty so much more largely that they at last separated themselves from all existing religious organizations and formed a new body, the Christian Church. In that church, while it has gone through many changes during nineteen hundred years, the personal influence of Jesus has persisted, so that thousands of people, today, are living nobler lives because of what he said and did and was. He is, therefore, the most important person in all history.

b. Our second question about Jesus is, How do we feel toward him? One may know all that is to be known about him and yet not have any personal interest in him. In that

case, knowledge about Jesus is worth no more than knowledge about birds, or flowers, or crystals. How, then, ought we to feel toward Jesus? Respect comes first, respect for one who was so true to his ideals that he endured a terrible death rather than be false to them; who had power so to win loyalty to himself that during his lifetime and through all the centuries since he has transformed many lives; who saw so clearly into matters of faith and life that in all these generations people have not outgrown his main teachings. Then, we may really love him, perhaps all the more because he is not now living in the body. We ought to feel stirred by his words and by his character, and may well give our lives into his keeping, in the sense that we feel sure that if we live according to his principles and example, we shall live worthily. Most of all, perhaps, we may attach ourselves with him to his cause, and become in our time and sphere, as he was in his, leaders in the search for truth, in the cleansing of the world from evil, in the inspiring of men and women to live according to the highest ideals.

Fourth Lesson.

OUR THOUGHT OF GOD.

1. The thought of God is central in all religious thinking and living.

Whatever our form of religion or our theories about the universe, we seem unable to get away from the thought that *God is*. Believing that God exists, we must believe that He is supreme; all things take their meaning from Him; our fate is entirely in His hands; all known things bring us so much knowledge of Him; what we do not know but may some time know is so much more knowledge of Him that we are yet to have; what is beyond human experience or investigation (such as the facts about life after death) we learn to "leave with God in faith," sure that it must somehow be right.

2. People have always believed in some kind of divine or superhuman beings.

Ignorant savages, seeing things happen with no human cause at work, supposed that

invisible spirits were present and active. As the world grew wiser, men said that these happenings resulted from the workings of "natural laws." But the wisest still say that even these natural laws are best understood as expressions of an infinite World Power. Instead of saying "spirits" or "gods," we now say "God." So from many gods we have come to One, for which idea we are, as we have seen, chiefly indebted to the Hebrews; but the idea is accepted and supported by the fullest modern knowledge and reasoning. We believe in God—in One God—because our minds are so made that we need the sense of unity, of harmony, as well as of belief in some kind of purpose in the world and in our lives.

3. We find God in nature and in the happenings of life.

We have just been seeing that that is the case. God as Creator, or as Power, seems to have been the first impression men had, and it is equally strong today. Many hymns and poems express this idea. We feel the thrill of an Unseen Presence in a storm or earthquake, or when viewing a great harvest or a great disaster. The sense of an Almighty

Power lies at the root of the profoundest religious experience. But with power goes grace, beauty, providence; the smoothness with which the stars move through the sky; the delicacy of the petals of a violet; the glory of the sunset; the care with which the tiniest insect is protected, all move us toward faith in the Creator. A great astronomer said, "I read the thoughts of God after Him." We find God in nature. If He made the universe, then we have only to study how things are put together to know how God works. And to know how any being or any person works is to know a great deal about him.

4. We find God within ourselves.

If God made us, as well as the stars, then we read his thoughts after him when we look into our own selves, our bodies, our minds, our souls. Just as every part of my body was given to me by the earth (which had received it from God) so every fact I know, every bit of strength I have, every desire or aspiration of my heart, came to me from the same source. We are strong then, not only in body but in spirit, in proportion as we keep in contact with God, the source of

all power. We may test this for ourselves. Note how much stronger we are when we know that we are in the right than when we know we are in the wrong, or even have doubts about it. A wise man said, long ago, that "the wicked flee when no man pursueth, but the righteous are bold as a lion." Another wise man said, "Be strong *in the Lord*." The same is true also in our mental activity. He who desires to know only what is true, as the real scientists do, has a clearer mind than he who is trying to sustain himself in a doubtful argument. The best way to view the universe is to see it as God's creation. The best way to think of ourselves is as God's children. To desire truth is to wish to read God's thoughts and so to unite ourselves mentally with Him. To do right is to work with God and so be strong in Him.

5. We find God in the experience of others.

People differ in their ability to come into contact with God. A person who knows botany will see a hundred times as much in crossing a field as another one does who, however learned, does not happen to know the plants. An educated person differs from one

who is uneducated mainly in that he has a larger number of contacts with truth. So we all "sit at the feet" of learned men. But there is something that is not exactly learning that is important also; perhaps we may call it wisdom. It is the ability to understand the meaning of things. People who only *know* are our teachers about facts; people who have wisdom are our teachers about the way we should feel and live. It is not that God selects these people and shows them what he hides from others. God has no favorites. All truth and wisdom are freely revealed to every one, but not all have equal ability to see and understand. So we have teachers—"authorities" we call them—in religion, as well as in science. The world's great leaders in religion, such as Channing, Wesley, Fox, Luther, St. Augustine, and, supremely, Jesus, speak with a certain authority in these matters. This is not because they have been somehow detailed and commissioned of God, or have been miraculously kept from errors, but because they have been so constituted in their minds and hearts that they have been able to see more clearly into the great problems of thought and life than the rest of us. We do not surrender our reason to any or all of these, but we gladly avail ourselves of their help; and,

seeing how wise they are in matters about which we are able to judge, we incline to accept as true (subject always to later correction) what they tell us in matters beyond our own power to know.

Fifth Lesson.

LIVING WITH GOD.

1. We do, as a matter of fact, live constantly with God.

The starry universe; the globe on which we live; the development of life, culminating in humanity; our bodies and their sustainment by food and drink and air; our minds, with ability to learn, to remember, to love, to hate, to aspire; our sense of right, our instinctive preference for what is true and honest and pure,—all these constitute a marvel infinitely surpassing any related in any book. They are manifestations of God. And they all mean, as Paul said, that "in Him we live and move and have our being."

2. We may cultivate the ability to realize this constant presence of God in our personal lives.

The artist trains himself to see beauty everywhere; students and teachers of morals

are always seeing "right" and "wrong" things being done; we all see what we look for. So we may learn to see God in all things, to feel God in all high emotions and in all worthy acts. The habit may well be formed of testing our thoughts and our acts by this high standard. Are they Godlike? Are they in harmony with what I know of God's ways, or with my conception of His nature? Perhaps what we really mean by "right" and "wrong" is that some things accord with and others are contrary to our highest thought of God. Conscience is thus a sort of tribunal before which we bring our acts and our very thoughts, to see if they accord with what we believe to be God's will. Also, we can refer our commonest experiences and doings to Him. The epistle of James says, "Ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that." Many have found this thought of the constant presence of a Divine Monitor a safeguard and an inspiration, and multitudes have testified that the thought of the Divine Companion is the happiest and richest of all experiences.

3. The thought of living with God helps us to understand the best things.

Why was Jesus, a poor carpenter of Nazareth, so influential? It is because he "lived with God." He talked about God as familiarly as he would have done about his own father and mother. His one purpose —he called it his meat and his drink—was to know and to do his Heavenly Father's will. So, it was God in him, not just himself, that made him so great. Why do we revere the Bible above other books? Because, while it contains errors, as other books do, and other books have the same quality of "inspiration" that it has, the writers were, on the whole, more in the habit of "living with God" than other authors have been. People who study these Biblical writings feel that power as they read. Why do we feel a thrill when we read or hear great thoughts, or see a glorious sunset or landscape, or experience a violent storm at sea, or witness or hear about a fine act of heroism? And why do we have such a sense of satisfaction when we decide to do the right thing at whatever cost? Because God is in these, and the God that is in us responds to it, much as one piano or violin string will vibrate when another does.

4. The worst punishment for sin is that it blunts this sense of God's presence, and the greatest reward of righteousness is that it makes us quick and sensitive to that presence.

When we first do wrong we feel guilty. That sense of guilt is like the sense of pain which protects our bodies from being destroyed. The next time we do the wrong act we feel less guilty, until, if we persist in it, we finally lose all sense of shame. That is the most terrible loss that could come to us. On the other hand, when even a bad person does a good deed, or remembers something beautiful from his innocent youth, he feels a thrill of mingled shame and joy. If he follows this up his satisfactions grow, until he may become "normal" again in his moral life. Growth in goodness and growth in badness are alike changes in sensitiveness to high things. Any one, wherever he is in the moral scale, may grow in either direction. Real satisfaction comes when the divine nature within us responds to the divine spirit all about us. The great Augustine said, "O God, thou hast made us for thyself, and our hearts are restless until we find rest in thee."

5. We may live with God in our work.

Jesus is reported to have said, "My Father worketh even until now, and I work." This is a good motto for us to adopt. The doctrine of evolution teaches that the force of nature (or, as we should say, the power of God) brought the development of the world up to the appearance of man, since which time man himself has taken hold of the same task and works with nature. Every effort to make ourselves or others better, or to make this world a better place in which to live is a continuation of evolution, in which nature and man, or, let us say, God and man, unite. That is what Paul meant when he said, "We are workers together with God." All honorable effort to feed, clothe and shelter ourselves and others, to teach, heal, protect, rescue, or in any way to serve our fellow-men, is not only work for God but work with God. The materials we use, the plans we follow, the impulse that prompts to generous effort are all from Him. We are admitted to partnership with God whenever we put forth any effort to promote what is right. We may—we should—feel the thrill of the divine energy as we thus clasp hands with God. Then would Jesus' prayer be answered: "That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us."

6. These actual contacts with God lead to the highest experience, that of "knowing God by faith."

Knowledge is limited, experience is of necessity within a narrow circle, but the mind and heart reach out beyond both. We hope, desire, aspire, and we fear, in matters we cannot see or (in any usual meaning of the word) know. Can we find God in that unexplored region? The testimony of the most developed souls in all the centuries is that we can find God even there, and that so to find him is our highest privilege. The mathematician believes that two and two are four everywhere; the chemist, that substances will always react in the same way under given conditions; the astronomer, that rules of measurement that are reliable on the earth are equally reliable in the heavenly spaces,—and yet not one of these scholars can verify his assumption. It is by precisely the same faith that we believe that justice, honesty, purity, love, are inwrought into the very fibre of the universe, so that it is always safe to act according to these principles; that they hold in all the stages of each life as well as through the generations, and that they do not cease for us even when the body dies. So we meet life, and death,

with all they may bring to us, after the manner of the man of God of whom it was said that "he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible."

Sixth Lesson.

THE UNITARIANS.

1. The name "Unitarian."

In 1568, several sects of Liberal Christians in Transylvania united in a single body, and became known on that account as the *Unitarii*, that is, Unitarians, or The United Ones. That name seems to have been carried across to England where it was applied to people whose faith happened to be similar to theirs. From England the name was brought to America. Having lost its original meaning, it came finally to designate persons holding certain beliefs.

There is, however, another reason why we are—and should be—called Unitarians. We believe in the Unity of God, as against the doctrine of the Trinity. When our church began in England, and later, in America, people generally believed in the Trinity in a way in which it is now rarely if ever held. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost were three very distinct persons, although united in one "Godhead." This

doctrine the progressive Christians rejected, reaffirming the teaching of Jesus, which is the teaching of the Bible in both the Old and the New Testaments, that there is One God, who is over all. On this account they were called Unitarians. The name was not chosen by them, but was given them by their opponents, much as the names "Methodist" and "Quaker" were given to other bodies of Christians. In each case the name given in derision has become a title of honor.

2. Unitarians unite and form a Church.

As early as 1750 there were many ministers of our faith in New England. In 1782, one of these, James Freeman, became minister of King's Chapel, and this, the first Episcopal Church in New England, then became the first Unitarian Church in America. In 1800, the original Pilgrim Church, in Plymouth, became openly Unitarian. In 1819 Dr. Channing preached his famous "Baltimore Sermon," which was such a ringing challenge that it is often spoken of as the real beginning of the Unitarian denomination. One year later, 1820, the Berry Street Conference was formed, for the purpose of bringing clergymen of Unitarian faith into fellowship. In 1825 the American Unitarian Association

was organized, and by that act the denomination, as such, began its career.

3. The American Unitarian Association.

The American Unitarian Association is the central missionary agency of Unitarians in this country. It maintains headquarters in its own building, at 25 Beacon Street, Boston. It is supported by the income from part of the invested funds, from life memberships (fifty dollars each) and from contributions of churches and individuals. Its organization includes a President, eight Vice-Presidents, Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Treasurer, and eighteen Directors, all elected at the Annual Meeting of the Association. These officers determine the kinds of work to be undertaken, choose the persons who are to be entrusted with this work, and determine what expenditures shall be made for the promotion of education, the printing and circulation of books and pamphlets, the planting of new churches and the assistance of those not able to maintain themselves, and the various philanthropies which commend themselves. Fraternal relations are maintained with liberal Christian churches and persons in various foreign countries, particularly in Japan. The same fraternal

and co-operative relations are sustained with churches and denominations of other faiths wherever possible. Preachers, lecturers and organizers are kept in the field to promote efficiency in existing Unitarian agencies, to establish such organizations where they do not exist, and to contribute in all possible ways to the enlightenment of men and women in matters pertaining to religion and human well-being.

4. Other Unitarian organizations.

The Unitarian Sunday School Society was begun in 1827, two years after the organization of the American Unitarian Association. It maintained a separate existence until 1912, when, without giving up its charter or its organization, it transferred its activities to the Department of Religious Education of the American Unitarian Association.

The General Conference of Unitarian and Other Christian Churches (until 1911 called the National Conference) was formed in 1864 "to consider the interests of our cause, and to institute measures for its good." It meets once in two years, its sessions being notable for the presentation of high thought and the consideration of plans for the promotion of knowledge and Christian citizenship.

District Conferences have been formed, some representing large portions of the United States and Canada, some covering States, and others, especially in New England, including small geographical sections in which our churches are numerous. In these conferences theological, ethical and educational questions are discussed and steps taken to promote the interests of pure religion.

The Alliance, which is the women's organization in the Unitarian body, began as The Woman's Auxiliary, in 1891. It maintains headquarters at 25 Beacon Street, Boston. There are Branch Alliances in nearly all Unitarian churches. Both locally and denominationally the Alliance is exceedingly active in sustaining religious work, in promoting education, and in assisting in every good cause.

Three theological schools prepare candidates for our ministry: The Harvard Divinity School, Cambridge, Mass., established in 1816; The Meadville (Pa.) Theological School, opened in 1844; The Pacific School for the Ministry, Berkeley, Cal., established in 1904. The Tuckerman School, in Boston, prepares religious workers in the Sunday-school, the church and general philanthropies. Hackley School, Tarrytown-on-

Hudson, and Proctor Academy, Andover, N.H., are under Unitarian auspices.

The ministers of the denomination have for their special benefit, in addition to the Berry Street Conference, already mentioned, the Ministers' Institute, organized in 1876, and meeting once in two years, alternately with the General Conference; the Ministerial Union, organized in 1864, and a considerable number of local groups, all aiming to promote ministerial fellowship and efficiency. In addition there are a number of philanthropic organizations, wholly or partly under Unitarian auspices.

Seventh Lesson.

MY OWN CHURCH.

[Since the facts to be brought out under this topic are different in the case of each church, the material here offered is in the nature of suggestions for study.]

1. The history of my church.

Date and reason for its founding, relation to other churches at the start, subsequently and now; its size in proportion to other churches in the neighborhood; the prominent persons in this community who have been or are now connected with my church; has there been any connection between the teachings or customs of this church and the part its members have taken in public affairs?

2. The present place of my church in the community.

How is it related to the educational or charitable organizations; how many of its men and women are officers of or active in any of these; is there any good work in progress that we are not connected with; is there

any section of our town, or any part of the whole population that is not now touched by our church work; has it any duties toward the community that are not met; is this church hospitable to the poor, and to foreigners; could the church building be opened at other times than it now is, and if so, for what uses?

3. My own relationship to my church.

If born and brought up in one of its families, what have I inherited from its past and present ministers, teachers and members? If I have left the church in which I was brought up, can I, and should I, repay that debt by serving this church? Is there anything that my church is now doing, or anything which I see it might do, in which I can help? Have I a right to accept the benefits this church gives me and do nothing in return? Am I justified, even, in living in a community that has been made better by this church without doing something to strengthen it? Should I wait before joining this church until I see some definite thing I can do for it or through it, or should I consider that my membership is itself a help, and that as a member I am more likely to see what is to be done, and do it?

What can the church do for me? Am I as good a person—as kind, patient, pure, earnest, reverent—as I should be, and as the church may help me to become? Am I more likely to feel the influence of the church, its worship and its activities, as a member than as a non-member? Will the fact that I take a public stand, in becoming a member, help me to carry out my good intentions? Will doing these things with others, and under an open avowal with them of a religious purpose, help me to become a better person?

Is the church to be regarded as a "saints' rest," a place where people who have already become good unite to enjoy their blessed state, or as a company of those who are striving to know more about religion, to cultivate religion in their own lives, and to work with others both to become better and to make the world better? Should I, then, wait until I feel that I am "good enough" to join, or should I join now because I want to become better, and to that end seek help through the church?

What help in living a religious life is one likely to receive in the many "offices" of the church? For example, what good may come through the service of baptism,—whether of a child or of an adult? What form of baptism seems to me most likely to be helpful?

Why do people such as I know observe the communion service? Would it perhaps help me? Should baptism, or communion, or any other ceremonial, be required of church members? On the other hand, am I justified in not considering them as possible helps? Is anything to be neglected that may help one to live a good life?

4. My present attitude to religion.

(1) Let each member of the class write out his views on religion. Encourage them to do this freely, not hesitating because of lack of clear notions, since such an effort will help to clarify their ideas. These "creeds" should not be made public in any way, save with the full consent of those who prepare them.

(2) Let each one write out a prayer, setting forth the things most seriously desired. It may be well for the class, preferably without guidance from any older person, to compose a group prayer, each contributing toward it, aiming to make it, when completed, express the real aspirations of all. Such a composite prayer may well be put into permanent form for the members to use in their subsequent lives, and preserved as a class memorial.

(3) Finally, let each member write down his conclusion as to joining or not joining the church at this time, or at any time, and the reasons therefor. This document should be strictly private, save as it may be shown to and perhaps talked over with the minister.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

For Further Study.

Lesson I.

Scriptures. Job 9: 1–12; 26; 28; 37 to 41; Ps. 18 (an earthquake), 19 (day and night), 29 (thunderstorm). Read Matt. 13, and note how freely Jesus drew upon nature for illustrations of his teaching. See also Paul's broad interpretation of a so-called "heathen" worship, in Acts 17: 22–31.

Hymns, in Hymn and Tune Book, Nos. 49, 69, 73. See especially

75. Go not, my soul, in search of him.
84. Hath not thy heart within thee burned?
100. Where is thy God, my soul?

Tracts.

62. Religion its own Evidence, by George Batchelor.
119. Why go to Church? by H. H. Mott.
280. The Religious Convictions of an American Citizen, by William H. Taft.

For those willing to go a little deeper into the subject two in the "Memorable Sermons" series are to be commended; 15, Starr King's "Spiritual Christianity," and 19, C. C. Everett's "The One Religion."

Landmark Discourses. Channing's "Unitarian Christianity," delivered in Baltimore in 1819, Emerson's "Divinity School Address," 1838, and Parker's "The Transient and Permanent in Christianity," 1841, are regarded by many as forming, together, the "charter" of Unitarianism. The study of these will be found most rewarding. They are Nos. 6, 9 and 10 in the series entitled "Memorable Sermons," printed by the A. U. A. for free distribution.

Striking Sayings.

Man cannot escape the fact that he is essentially a religious being. M. J. Savage.

Noble conduct is the most beautiful, persuasive and inspiring thing in the world. In other words, our natures answer to God's nature. C. F. Dole.

Lesson II.

Scriptures. Compare the views of the "heathen," as expressed in such passages as 2 Chron. 33: 2; Ezra 6: 21; Ps. 9: 15; with a contrary view shown in Jesus' parables of The Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 30–37) and of the Last Judgment (Matt. 25: 31–46). Note also Jesus' sayings in Matt. 8: 5–12; Mark 9: 38–41; John 10: 16 (note especially the reading in the R. V.).

Hymns. Note how frequently hymns express breadth of view coupled with intensity of faith. See especially, in the Hymn and Tune Book:

29. O God, our God, thou shinest here.
452. One holy church of God appears.

Tracts. Many of the A. U. A. tracts deal with or illustrate the underlying principles of our faith. Nos. 58, 89, 91, 98, 119, 210 and 280 will be found especially helpful.

Books. The attitude of mind which should lie back of specific beliefs is admirably set forth in C. C. Everett's essay on *Reason in Religion*, in his "Essays, Theological and Literary." Emerton's "Unitarian Thought" and Martineau's "Seat of Authority in Religion" should at least be made known to pupils. The statement of belief on page 112 of Dole's "Catechism" is admirably adapted to illustrate the nature and need of a right point of view.

Great Sayings. The opening verses of Pope's *Universal Prayer*, Tennyson's *The Higher Pantheism*, and the closing stanzas of *In Memoriam* will be found illuminating.

LESSON III.

Scriptures. Passages used in connection with Lesson II apply here as well. The Bible nowhere speaks of itself as a whole. Rev. 22: 18, 19, refers only to the book in which it occurs, not the whole Bible. 2 Tim. 3: 16, if read in the Revised Version, means that all really inspired writing, wherever found, is helpful. For the normal humanity of Jesus, see Luke 2: 48; Matt. 13: 55–58; Matt. 19: 16–17.

Hymns. Several of those already used, and
216. O thou great friend to all the sons of men.

441. Eternal One, thou living God.
453. Light of ages and of nations.

Tracts.

47. What think ye of Christ? Stopford A. Brooke.
69. Modern Biblical Criticism. C. H. Toy.
85. The Bible in Theology. W. W. Fenn.
160. Is the Bible Infallible? J. T. Sunderland.
213. The Jesus of the Gospels. J. Estlin Carpenter.
279. Why "The Leadership of Jesus"? A. M. Rihbany.

Great Sayings. Emerson's *The Problem*, and Whittier's *Our Master*, and parts of Lowell's *The Cathedral* illustrate and enforce the teachings of this lesson.

LESSONS IV. AND V.

These two lessons are so related that the same references apply equally to both.

Scriptures. God in nature, recall the passages referred to in notes on Chapter I; God in life, Job 13: 15; Ps. 73: 16–17; Ps. 75: 4–8; 84; 91; Matt. 7: 15–20; Matt. 25: 31–40; John 4: 23–24; 1 Cor. 10: 31; and many verses in the eighth chapter of Romans.

Hymns.

42. O Thou whose power o'er moving worlds presides.
49. God of the earth, the sky, the sea.
73. O Love divine, whose constant beam.

75. Go not, my soul, in search of him.
108. I cannot find thee. Still on restless pinion.
284. I look to thee in every need.

Tracts. A convincing and brilliant presentation of the thought of God as revealed in nature is found in Dr. Calthrop's "God," Tract 68. In Tract 89, Dr. Martineau treats the same theme philosophically. See also Channing's statement, Memorable Sermons, No. 6, pages 13–19; Crooker's, Tract 2, pages 24–26; and Crothers's, Tract 98, pages 14–17. Other helpful tracts in the list are Nos. 135, 180, 210.

LESSON VI.

Scriptures. As the main argument against the Unitarians has been Biblical, it is well to note a few facts. 1 John 5: 7, long regarded as conclusive proof of the Trinity, is not in the Revised Version, since scholars agree that it is a late addition. Matt. 28: 19 is now known to be a baptismal formula originating long after Jesus died; it does not say that those three are "one," or imply any unity between them. The great Hebrew declaration, Deut. 6: 3–9, was held to by all loyal Jews, including Jesus and his disciples. 1 Cor. 8: 6 states explicitly the doctrine of the apostles.

Hymns. One of the finest testimonies to the power of our Unitarian faith is the fact that it has expressed itself so wonderfully in song. The Hymn and Tune Book is thus our finest state-

ment of faith. See, for example, the following hymns by Unitarian authors:

John Milton: 113, 383, and especially
20. Let us with a gladsome mind.

Sarah Flower Adams:
287. Nearer, my God, to Thee.

Sir John Bowring: 90, 194, 260, 499, and especially
121. God is love, his mercy brightens.
213. In the cross of Christ I glory.

Edmund Hamilton Sears:
189. Calm on the listening ear of night.
191. It came upon the midnight clear.

Theodore Parker:
216. O thou great friend to all the sons of men.

John White Chadwick: Ten hymns; see especially
294. O Love divine, of all that is.
473. It singeth low in every heart.

William Channing Gannett: Six hymns; see especially
6. Bring, O morn, thy music.
65. He hides within the lily.

Samuel Longfellow: Twenty-six hymns; see especially
49. God of the earth, the sky, the sea.

372. Go forth to life, O child of earth.
453. Light of ages and of nations.

Frederick Lucian Hosmer: Thirty-four hymns; see especially

74. One thought I have, my ample creed.
75. Go not, my soul, in search of him.
295. O Thou in all thy might so far.

Lesson VII.

Scriptures. Many churches inscribe Biblical verses on their walls. If your church does so, or if any church in your neighborhood does, the suitableness of such a motto may be discussed with profit. What Scripture passage would the members like to see adopted by their church as its motto? Such a passage as Matt. 10: 5–6 may mean narrow sympathies or natural preference of your own group as the centre of loyal attachment. Many verses already referred to in these notes express that breadth of view which is so admirable.

Hymns. The class may be interested to note what hymns are most frequently sung in their church, as these suggest the trend of its thought, perhaps also of its activities. Are they songs of reflection or of activity? of penitence or of praise? of trust or of brotherhood? What hymns do they prefer, and what one, if any, would they choose for their church hymn? or Sunday-school hymn? or Y. P. R. U. hymn? or class hymn?

Tracts. At this point the Bulletins of the Departments of Religious Education and of Community Service, and the Church Efficiency Pamphlets will be found especially useful. They show the wide range of possible church activities, and suggest ways in which the local church, perhaps through the activity of the members of the confirmation class, may become of greater value to its own members, to the community in which it is situated, the denomination of which it is a member, and that better social order which the Church Universal is set to promote.

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